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INFO RUEHKK/ARAB ISRAELI COLLECTIVE
RUEHZM/GULF COOPERATION COUNCIL COLLECTIVE
RUCPDO/DEPT OF COMMERCE WASHDC

C O N F I D E N T I A L RIYADH 001435

SENSITIVE
SIPDIS

EEB/TPP/IPE AND NEA/ARP
USTR FOR JASON BUNTIN
USDOC FOR TYLER HOFFMAN

E.O. 12958: DECL: 09/17/2017
TAGS: [ECON](#) [ETRD](#) [EINV](#) [PGOV](#) [KIPR](#) [KTFN](#) [SA](#)
SUBJECT: MINISTRY OF CULTURE AND INFORMATION PLANS TO
COMBAT IP PIRACY

REF: A. RIYADH 1271
[1](#)B. 07 RIYADH 2437

Classified By: Deputy Chief of Mission David Rundell for reasons 1.4 (b)
) and (d).

[1](#)1. (C) Econoff met with Ministry of Culture and Information (MoCI) Under Secretary Abdul Rahman Al Hazaa September 8 to discuss ongoing efforts to combat IPR piracy and violations in Saudi Arabia, particularly software, music, and DVDs. Al Hazaa said that IPR enforcement is a priority for Saudi Arabia, particularly in its efforts to be removed from the U.S. Special 301 Watch List. He said that although he only had been in his position for seven months, he personally had for many years observed IPR violations of varying levels of sophistication in the country, and he underlined that Saudi Arabia needed a "long, well-organized plan" to address the issue.

[1](#)2. (C) Al Hazaa told Econoff that his office already has taken several steps to address IPR violations, including the creation of a program for 50 undercover field inspectors to identify vendors selling pirated goods locally, and another program to send written warnings to property owners who are found to be illegally distributing satellite television to their tenants. However, the Saudi undercover program remains in the conceptual stages, and it is not yet clear how successful the written warnings will prove to be. Al Hazaa then described future projects he hoped to begin by the end of October: working with the Violations Review Committee (VRC) at the Ministry of Commerce to institutionalize penalties for vendors relative to the size of the seizure of pirated goods; expediting case processing and populating the VRC's case-tracking database to increase transparency; and pressing the Ministry of Finance to begin collecting the fines assessed.

[1](#)3. (C) Finally, Al Hazaa addressed the MoCI's relationship with the private industry group Business Software Alliance (BSA). Acknowledging that the Ministry and the industry group share the same goals of eliminating piracy, Al Hazaa encouraged realism in assessing what actions might actually be taken and what achievements were possible. He said about the group, "They have good ideas. Sometimes we are at fault for not showing support for their initiatives. Sometimes it is lack of technology, man-power, or time. But we do not always have to explain why."

[1](#)4. (C) On September 21, the Arabic language daily newspaper Al-Eqtisadiah reported that the MoCI had confiscated over 500,000 pirated goods during the past three months. Al Hazaa was quoted in the article as crediting the MoCI's Copyright Department with the raids that resulted in the confiscations.

Al Hazaa was also reported to have warned of severe penalties for those found in violation of Saudi IPR and copyright laws, to include fines and prison sentences.

15. (C) Comment: Under Secretary Al Hazaa understands and shows genuine concern about the IPR situation in Saudi Arabia, as well as a real commitment to take the steps necessary to confront piracy, especially on the street vendor level. Due to Al Hazaa's rank and influence, he may become an effective catalyst for increased enforcement of IPR violations in Saudi Arabia. His public statements denouncing piracy and threatening penalties are a positive first step. End comment.

FRAKER